

TOWN OF ANDOVER

Overview of Massachusetts Municipal Government

Massachusetts Municipalities

All land in Massachusetts is incorporated into 351 cities and towns. Until 1938, there were 355 cities and towns. Municipalities in Massachusetts do not have independent authority and derive their power and authority from the Legislature. A municipality must conform to the current provisions of general law or seek legislation giving approval to any change.

The first city in Massachusetts was Boston which incorporated in 1822 upon a change to the Massachusetts Constitution in 1821. This allowed for the first time a form of government outside of Town Meeting. The latest city to organize was North Attleborough in 2018. The Legislature created legislation for six types of cities, plans A to F. Home-rule petitions are allowed which can create variations of these forms. There are currently 59 cities in Massachusetts.

Towns have changed greatly since the Town of Norwood was the first to hire a professional manager in 1915. To this day, their CEO is referred to as the General Manager. Several communities created professional managers over the next 50 years. Beginning in the 1970's, municipal government in Massachusetts began to change at a rapid pace to the point that 254 of the 292 towns have a professional manager to some extent.

Even though Massachusetts government has change greatly in the last 50 years, it is quite different from the trends in the rest of the Country, particularly outside of New England. Nearly 49% of municipalities in the US are governed by the Council-Manager format and 44% by the Mayor-Council format. Town Meeting is relegated to the New England area. There are currently 292 towns in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Towns – 292
Communities with Open Town Meeting
Population of 20,000 or more

	Pop.	Income	CEO Title	BoS #	#Voters ATElection	% of Pop	#Voters ATM
Andover	33,201	76,456	Town Manager	5	4,186	12.61%	536
Dracut	29,457	31,392	Town Manager	5	2,244	7.62%	Quorum
Tewksbury	28,961	37,185	Town Manager	5	1,801	6.22%	145
North Andover	28,352	54,095	Town Manager	5	1,534	5.41%	387
Marshfield	25,132	47,361	Town Administrator	3	1,379	5.49%	Quorum
Wakefield	24,932	42,076	Town Administrator	7	3,265	13.10%	255
Yarmouth	23,793	29,303	Town Administrator	5	2,618	11.00%	Quorum
Mansfield	23,184	46,182	Town Manager	5	953	4.11%	278
Middleborough	23,116	27,051	Town Manager	5	1,756	7.60%	Quorum
Easton	23,112	46,683	Town Administrator	5	987	4.27%	Quorum
Wilmington	22,325	40,654	Town Manager	5	3,339	14.96%	364
Hingham	22,157	103,297	Town Administrator	3	2,850	12.86%	Quorum
Westford	21,951	57,815	Town Manager	5	937	4.27%	540
Acton	21,924	61,849	Town Manager	5	1,974	9.00%	397
Wareham	21,822	22,500	Town Administrator	5	1,478	6.77%	Quorum
Canton	21,561	55,479	Town Administrator	5	3,060	14.19%	305
Stoneham	21,437	40,230	Town Administrator	5	2,194	10.23%	444
Sandwich	20,675	36,590	Town Manager	5	2,100	10.16%	566

Massachusetts Towns – 292
Communities with Representative Town Meeting

33 Representative Town Meeting

Est. 1934 - 6k or more pop.

	Pop.	Income	CEO Title	BoS #
Brookline	58,732	78,549	Town Administrator	5
Plymouth	56,468	33,573	Town Manager	5
Arlington	42,844	54,612	Town Manager	5
Billerica	40,243	34,294	Town Manager	5
Shrewsbury	35,608	51,488	Town Manager	5
Dartmouth	34,032	31,728	Town Administrator	5
Chelmsford	33,802	41,541	Town Manager	5
Natick	33,006	54,316	Town Manager	5
Falmouth	31,531	36,337	Town Manager	5
Lexington	31,394	105,007	Town Manager	5
Needham	28,886	103,782	Town Manager	5
Norwood	28,602	40,730	General Manager	5
Milford	27,999	31,958	Town Administrator	3
Wellesley	27,892	193,176	Executive Director	5
Milton	27,003	61,421	Town Administrator	3
Stoughton	26,962	30,795	Town Manager	5
Saugus	26,628	31,072	Town Manager	5
Danvers	26,493	38,921	Town Manager	5
Reading	24,747	52,074	Town Manager	5
Belmont	24,729	85,813	Town Administrator	3
Dedham	24,729	50,584	Town Manager	5
Burlington	24,498	43,514	Town Administrator	5
Walpole	24,070	50,355	Town Administrator	5
Winchester	21,374	100,074	Town Manager	5
Ludlow	21,103	25,853	Town Administrator	5
South Hadley	17,514	29,500	Town Administrator	5
Auburn	16,188	31,846	Town Manager	5
Fairhaven	15,873	27,835	Town Administrator	3
Swampscott	13,787	69,261	Town Administrator	5
Holbrook	10,791	28,238	Town Administrator	5
Adams	8,485	21,675	Town Administrator	5
Montague	8,437	21,902	Town Administrator	3
Lee	5,943	26,385	Town Administrator	3

Massachusetts Towns – 292

CEO/CAO

Administrative Coordinator	1
Chief Administrative Officer	3
City Manager	3
Executive Assistant	1
Executive Director	1
Executive Secretary	1
General Manager	1
Town Administrator	166
Town Coordinator	3
Town Manager	74
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	254

Board of Selectmen

Composition

7	1
5	141
3	150
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	292